



NEWS RELEASE

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PENNSYLVANIA AG PRODUCERS URGED TO APPLY NOW FOR FEDERAL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

HARRISBURG, PA, July 18, 2008— Pennsylvania farmers and landowners interested in receiving financial assistance through USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) conservation programs should apply by August 29, 2008 to be considered in initial funding allocations for 2009. "Depending on the number of requests received and available funding, this may be the only funding opportunity for 2009," announced Craig Derickson, NRCS State Conservationist. People who applied in 2008 but did not have their application funded can ask to have their existing application kept active for consideration.

NRCS's natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, improve air and water quality, improve and increase wildlife habitat, restore and enhance wetlands, and improve water conservation. The programs are voluntary and provide financial payments and technical assistance for the planning, design and installation of conservation practices and systems. Applications are currently being accepted for the Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Applications are not yet being accepted for new programs or options created by the 2008 Farm Bill because guidelines for those have not yet been developed.

AMA and EQIP offer assistance to agriculture and forestry producers to install or implement structural, vegetative, and management practices. Help is available for erosion control practices, livestock grazing, livestock manure and nutrient management systems, improvement of irrigation systems efficiency, wildlife habitat establishment, forest management, pest management/IPM, conversion to No Till; cover crops, and CNMP Plan Development.

Applicants for AMA and EQIP must be farmers and producers engaged in agricultural production on eligible agricultural land.

The WHIP program aims to enhance wildlife habitat on private agricultural land or forest land. WHIP provides cost-share assistance for practices that establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. In Pennsylvania, high priorities for WHIP include addressing issues such as declining wildlife species' habitats such as grassland habitat, stream habitat and early successional habitat.

Through WRP, NRCS provides financial assistance in the form of easement payments and wetland restoration cost-share assistance, and technical assistance for wetland restoration and management. Participating landowners can establish conservation easements of either permanent or 30-year duration, or can enter into restoration cost-share agreements where no easement is involved. In all instances, landowners continue to control access to their land.

For all programs, the applicant must have control of the land for the life of the proposed contract. All applications will be evaluated and ranked according to environmental benefits and cost effectiveness. In most projects NRCS does not cover all the costs of installation practices; participants must pay a portion.

To learn more about these and other conservation programs, please contact your local USDA NRCS service center listed in the telephone book, or visit <http://www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov>.

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